

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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March 10, 2020

To Zoning Board of Appeals
RE: Summer Street 40B application

Applicant responses in red below. April 30, 2020

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals,

Thank you for providing this office with the opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Permit Application submitted by Omni Development LLC at 55 Summer Street. This proposed 300-unit rental/owner project will, without question, have substantial impacts upon our Community, the South Walpole neighborhoods that are in and around this development, our infrastructure and our municipal and school operations. The Select Board is respectfully requesting that the Zoning Board of Appeals consider the following items as part of the public hearing process.

The project as proposed is not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. The Select Board recognizes that, as expressed in the State's Design Guidelines, 40Bs typically introduce greater density into a neighborhood than what currently exists or is allowed by zoning. But, we also support the assertion in the Guidelines that *"it is important to mitigate the height and scape of the buildings to the adjoining site...it is particularly important to consider the predominate buildings types, setbacks and roof lines of the existing context."*¹ And while the DHCD 40B guidelines state that there is no "rule of thumb"² for appropriate density, the rental

unit portion is far denser than what exists in the surrounding neighborhood. The siting of the buildings on the property, roof lines, and architectural style must be readdressed to more thoughtfully fit into the surrounding context.

The applicant has worked hard to ensure the Cedars is in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. For instance, the Cedars density is in keeping with the neighborhood as the overall density of the Cedars at 7.62 units/ buildable acres is less dense then the 7.88 units per acre of properties immediately surrounding the South Walpole Common which is the gateway to the South Walpole neighborhood (see attached map and density chart). Taken on their own, the five units at the entrance of the project at 3.33 units/acre are less dense than the three adjacent properties immediately to the west at a density of 4.7 units per acre.

The tallest and most dense parts of the project are set back from Summer Street with single family homes at the entrance. The first townhomes are set back 650 feet from Summer Street and the first 4 story, 48-unit building is set back 1650 feet from Summer Street.

The Select Board is concerned about the location of the driveway into the property abutting the MBTA tracks. With the number of units and number of young children in the complex and playing in the area, the complex would need significant safeguards to protect children and provide barriers between the complex and trains.

The Applicant has added a six (6) foot tall black chain link fence along the eastern boundary of the proposed developed areas of the project, only eliminating sections within the two vernal pools and wetlands to minimize impact at these resource areas.

The Select Board is concerned about the single-access road into the project site serving 300 units. This condition poses serious safety risks.

Regarding the Boulevard entrance, the design meets the NFPA standard. Please see Fire Department Review letter for the approval and reference (sec 18.2.3.4.1.1) to the NFPA Standards and the acceptance of the boulevard and roadway widths within the design.

Additionally, the access drive is located precariously close to an existing at grade MBTA crossing. This is a high-speed train crossing with functioning street gates, which will cause traffic to stop and back up at the gates well past the entrance/exit and likely cause a confusing and hazardous traffic condition.

Regarding the railroad crossing see response to the Tetra Tech (TT) comment Number 5 of the Peer Review letter dated April 10.

Additionally, the Select Board is concerned about children getting from the development safely to schools. The pedestrian route to school lacks adequate infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks and safety lighting. The Select Board urges the ZBA to work with the developer on the opportunity for off-site improvements to mitigate the impact of their proposal. The Select Board takes pedestrian safety as a high priority and Walpole is a Complete Streets Community. This development should seek to better meet these standards as the public hearing process moves forward.

See response to TT Comment # 58.

The Select Board would also encourage the ZBA to **work** with the developer to find creative design solutions that respect the underlying wetlands and more intentionally consider the surrounding neighborhood.

See responses to the Conservation Commission comment Letter dated 2-14,2020.

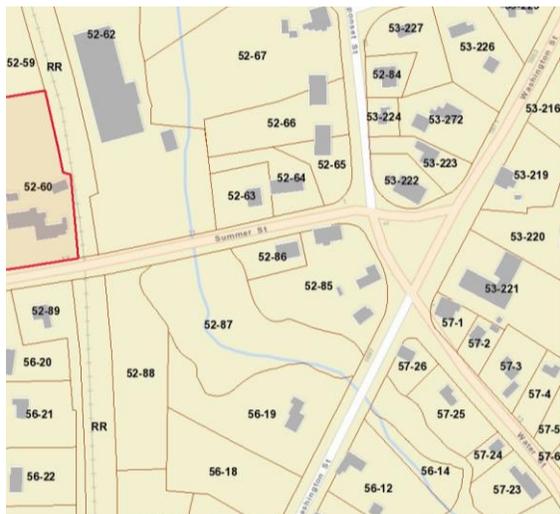
Given the large scale and impact of this project, anything less would be a loss of an important opportunity to integrate the development into the Town and create a vibrant community.

¹ The Cecil Group, Inc. (2011, January). *Handbook: Approach to Chapter 40b Design Reviews* Retrieved from <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/16/handbook-approachtoch40b-designreviewa.pdf>

² DHCD. *Department of Housing and Community Development Guidelines, updated December 2014. G.L. C.40B Comprehensive Permit Projects.* Retrieved from <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/10/guidecomprehensivepermit.pdf>. IV-3.

Units per Acre Surrounding area *

Address	Assessor #	Type	Occupancy	Acreage	units/acre
1885 Washington	53-222	Apartmen	7	0.36	
1873 Washington	53-223	sfh	1	0.22	
1871 Washington	53-272	sfh	1	0.59	
31 Neponset	53-224	sfh	1	0.14	
35-37 Neponset	52-84	MF	2	0.21	
20 Neponset	52-65	sfh	1	0.47	
1887 Washington	52-85	MF	9	0.6	
1896 Washington	57-26	MF	2	0.19	
9 Water	57-25	sfh	1	0.32	
11 Summer	52-64	sfh	1	0.57	
1890 Washinton	57-1	MF	3	0.16	
8 Water	57-2	sfh	1	0.12	
8-12 Summer	52-86	MF	3	0.24	
			33	4.19	7.875895



*Data collected from Walpole Assessors database

Fitting in to the Neighborhood

4 Homes on 3 abutting lots on Summer on .85 total acres

5 Homes at entrance to project on 1.5 total acres



Density

	RENTAL	OWNERSHIP	TOTAL
Total Acres	27.85	26.88	54.73
Buildable	18.56	20.83	39.39
Density	8.62 units/acre	2.23 units/acre	5.48 units/acre
	(12.9/buildable acre)	(2.88/buildable acre)	(7.62/buildable acre)

Meets 40B approved criteria